

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1273

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MONTREAL PRIORITY

AMCONSUL TORONTO

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0081

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: NON SEMPER EA SUNT QUAE VIDENTUR

REF: MONTREAL 491

1. PROMINENT PQ JUNIOR MINISTER AND SON OF FORMER QUEBEC PREMIER, JEAN-FRANCOIS BERTRAND, RECENTLY CONCEDED PRIVATELY TO ME THAT HE DOUBTS REFERENDUM ON SOVEREIGNTY ASSOCIATION WILL SUCCEED. AS "POLITICAL REALIST," HE POINTED TO SOLID ANGLOPHONE OPPOSITION AND TO FACT THAT PQ MUST GAIN ABOUT 2/3 OF FRANCOPHONE VOTES TO WIN. TEMPER OF TIMES, WITH ECONOMY IN RECESSION, IS WORKING AGAINST ANY SUCH MASSIVE SUPPORT OF CONSTITUTIONAL ADVENTURES. HE CONCEDED. HIS INTUITION AS POLITICIAN HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY RECENTLY PUBLISHED RESULTS OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, PARTICULARLY IQOP POLL WHICH INDICATES SOME 58 PERCENT OF QUEBECKERS WOULD VOTE AGAINST SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION (REFTEL).

2. IN MOMENT OF UNUSUAL FRANKNESS, BERTRAND CONFIDED THAT IMPORTANCE OF PQ ELECTORAL VICTORY IN 1976 IS NOT NECESSARILY THAT IT WILL LEAD TO QUEBEC INDEPENDANCE. RATHER, ITS
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SIGNIFICANCE IN ITS EFFECT ON REST OF CANADA. IT SHOOK UP COMPLACENT ANGLOPHONE, HE ASSERTED, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY ASSUMED FRANCOPHONES WOULD NEVER BE ABLE GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER AND POSE CREDIBLE THREAT TO NATIONAL UNITY. PQ VICTORY HAS DESTROYED THIS COMFORTABLE ASSUMPTION. HENCEFORTH, QUEBECOIS WILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND "CANADA WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN."

3. COMMENT: BERTRAND'S FRANK REMARKS ALMOST CERTAINLY ECHO FEELINGS HELD BY MANY OTHERS IN QUEBEC WHO SUPPORT PQ BUT WHO COULD BE SATISFIED WITH CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS SHORT OF POLITICAL INDEPENDANCE. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT THE PQ IS LOADED WITH CLOSET FEDERALISTS. BUT SHOULD A GENEROUS CONSTITUTIONAL SETTLEMENT WITH THE REST TF CANADA SATISFY QUEBEC'S GRIEVANCES AND BLIGHTED ASPIRATIONS AS THEY PERCEIVE THEM THEN THERE SEEMS A GOOD CHANCE THAT MA Y OF THESE REALISTS COULD COMPROMISE WITH THEIR HEADIER DREAMS OF INDEPENDENCE.
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